

Fifth Judicial District Family Court Services Report 6/10/2008

The **Fifth Judicial District** Family Court Services continues to cultivate new resources and referrals within the eight counties. Each week brings new challenges and potentials for the coordinator and contractors. Interested parties are being referred to FCS for **case consultation** from an increasingly diverse group of agencies and individuals.

Parenting Apart and Children's Classes

Parenting Apart class facilitators provided 9 hours of education to 900 adults in 2007 and 398 in the first 5 months of 2008. (Total **1,298 adults**) Children's class instructors assisted 198 children in 2007 and in 2008 they have supported 196. (Total **394 children, ages 6-17**) Parent's reported a total of **1,900 children who were potentially** impacted though their parents newly learned skills. Surveys of class participants in the education programs demonstrate they are benefiting from highly skilled facilitators and receiving quality information.

Parents are asked to evaluate their 9 hours of class work and to share one idea they found particularly helpful. Participants wrote statements such as:

"Kids are important. Answer children's questions honestly. Talking to kids together. Taking the high road. Involving both parents in special events. Compromise...Don't send messages through children. Being more physically and emotionally involved when with my children. Daddy's are important. How to make myself and my children safer. Schedule and structure for family. Great class!...Now I understand why this class was ordered."

Directed Co-Parenting, Family Counseling, Family Screenings

Family Court Services has had various interesting referrals for **Directed Co-Parenting, Family Counseling** and **assistance in developing parenting plans** this fiscal year. Many cases referred to the Coordinator do not fit into a traditional mediation model and have involved numerous concerned parties, including parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, guardians and sometimes adult siblings.

Interim Parenting Time Consultations (IPTC)

Interim Parenting Time Consultations (IPTC) continue to be extraordinarily successful. Parents, attorneys and Judges are describing an increase in resolution of complicated and conflicted custody concerns. When the IPTC consultants have completed their reports and meet with both parents to discuss the outcome, participants have often shifted to a more amenable position. The major increase related to IPTCs has been in the requests for financial assistance.

Supervised Access and Transfers

The district trained five new supervisors for **access and transfers**. Because of the quality of training provided by Family and Children in the Courts, I feel confident that children are safe when being supervised by any of our contractors.

I personally supervised a father and five month old baby. Father was not prepared to handle being a parent. Eventually, this Father agreed to voluntarily terminate his parental rights. I was made sadly aware of the emotional drain on our access supervisors when I facilitated the **supervised closure session with this father, paternal grandparents and paternal great-grandparents**.

Program Development

During this past year, judges from our District, Bollar, Borresen and Smyser traveled to 1st District to train with Family Law Arbitration project. Judge Duff had been training local attorneys and educating parents during the parenting apart classes about the arbitration process. Positive feedback from cases using this process have been adding another alternative to litigation.

Judges Borresen and Duff attend parenting classes monthly to introduce families to court process and explain the variety of tools available to them. Parents report that they find their appearances to be helpful and reassuring that they are being served as individuals and not just cases.

Plans for the opening of a Family Court Services office located in Twin Falls are finally approaching reality. There is some remodeling left to complete. This will make space available for FCS to meet with clients without disrupting someone else's space. FCS has developed a comprehensive program brochure that will be in the office as well as offered at all 8 county courthouses.

Maintaining progress in programming, creating change, attempting to mediate between high spirited litigators and seeking to place children's futures as a priority, can be challenging. Reflecting over the past fiscal year, numbers of children and families served as well as the progress made with projects; it makes me proud to work with the district contractors, legal professionals and supportive administrative staff who make Magic Valley a friendly community for our children.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Fifth Judicial District